



Life returns to 'normal' in school as children work together on projects and enjoy their time in school.

NEWSLETTER

for Blackwell First School

...developing the whole child...



March 2021

Dear Families,

At exactly this time, twelve months ago, we were settling into a new routine during the first period of restricted attendance at schools and setting up systems and procedures that we did not expect to be operating twelve months later.

Having now experienced two periods of school closure and disruption, we are grateful that we have had such a limited amount of bubble closure and hope that this continues. Our fear is that when restrictions are lifted, transmission rates may increase and this, in turn, will lead to further bubble closures. To avoid this, we ask you to continue to follow government advice and maintain social distancing. We were pleased that the Worcestershire County Council Covid Advisors (who randomly visit all schools) reported how impressed they were by the end of school day collection systems in operation and thank you for supporting school with this. We all know how hard this is and so many of us are abiding by the rules and sacrificing so much. But we also know that keeping school open is a priority for you all and enables the children to operate in a relatively 'normal' way in school and at home.

In the news, we hear messages about 'catch up' and 'lost generation' which in our opinion are unhelpful messages to present in terms of the children we have in school. The children here have settled back into school extremely well thanks to the work we have all put in to prepare them and welcome them back. Of course, there are some aspects of the curriculum which will be revisited where this is needed. We will support you with knowing how to help the children with some 'Handy Hints' that you may wish to use to help the children over the Easter break and we will also support families with some ideas for during the summer holiday period too. There is no expectation to complete anything but the ideas are there to support families who would like support.

As important as supporting the children's academic learning is, there are other aspects which are equally as important in developing the whole child. The missed opportunities for social engagement means that the children need time to play, talk, share and turn take. We are providing these opportunities in school so that their skills can develop and they can mature in their ability to interact successfully. For the very youngest children in Red and Green Classes, this is of particular importance and as they settle in and forge or renew friendships, learning how to 'get along' is a priority.

Our vision at Blackwell guides us in ensuring that we work to meet everyone's needs, in the true sense of being a diverse community school. We relish the opportunity of challenging all children and helping them to master the steps that they need to support them in their learning journey, preparing them for their own challenging and exciting future lives.

For several years, we have worked on developing our mastery approach to the curriculum, teaching not only the knowledge required to master the content of the curriculum but also the skills required of the children in future lives and careers. Communication, inter personal skills, resilience and problem solving are core skills that enable children and adults to function and achieve well in life.

It's a good job that many of us have had these skills to draw on during the last twelve months...resilience and community mindedness has been crucial.

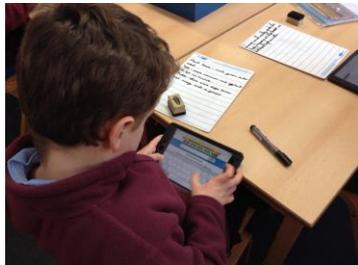
Best wishes for a Happy Easter break.

Mrs Moss

In Green Class, the children's developing computing skills are being demonstrated on the new laptops.



The PFTA funded ipads and laptops last year and in these photographs you can see how they are being used to teach new computing skills as well as research skills in History.



SCHOOL SPORT/ HEALTH AND THE ARTS

Sport- Green Class children have been receiving specialist PE teaching for Games from the All Active Academy coach this half term as part of the specialist PE offer to children.

Arts – Blue and Green Class Family Assemblies will be available on YouTube this week on Tuesday for Blue Class and Wednesday for Green Class. The children have worked hard to bring their learning to you through these short films. We hope you enjoy them.

Blue Class - <https://youtu.be/OGLSXWFK-sg>

Green Class - <https://youtu.be/BeXbKsWevFM>

Join us on Thursday on Zoom for an 'End of Term Hello'. Times and meeting IDs and passcodes have been sent to your class ParentApp. Each class will join you for around ten minutes (Nursery a little longer). We hope that this gives you a virtual opportunity to join us in school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

As a community school, rather than a school with a religious affiliation, we are required to teach RE as part of the locally agreed syllabus from Worcestershire and also ensure that the children experience a daily act of Collective Worship with moral messages, including those from religious stories.

During this week, the messages from the Easter story will feature and Rev Sheri Gidney will also lead Wednesday's worship for the children.

ASSESSMENTS

At this point in the year, I normally share with you the assessment arrangements used in school and nationally to help us, as teachers, focus on next steps for learning and ensure that you, as parents, understand how your child is performing both academically and socially across the curriculum.

Under normal circumstances, all of the children are assessed by their teacher and these assessments form the basis of our judgements and help us plan for their learning. The national testing includes: phonic check for Y1, SATs for Y2, Times Tables check for Y4. The government has announced that none of these will take place again this year, as was the case last year. This is of no significance to your child's learning.

The teachers have been assessing the children during the last week, which will enable them plan accurately for the children's needs after Easter. We are very pleased with the return to school for most children and how hard they have worked at home.

The children's end of year reports will be issued in July and we will report on the children's progress this year as well as providing information on their return to school and their social development. Targets will be set for all children at the level they are working at in order to challenge all children at all levels.

Working together with you, we will continue to support the children in their recovery following two periods of restricted attendance and hoping that the children all remain in school moving forwards.

General information

Contract Tracing over Easter- School will be required to report any positive cases of COVID-19 amongst the children over Easter.

For those children not attending holiday club – if your child develops any symptoms on Friday 2nd or Saturday 3rd April, they must be tested using a PCR test at a test centre and both the date of the onset of symptoms as well as the test date and result need reporting to office@blackwell.worcs.sch.uk in order that school can notify any families of the need for their children to self isolate.

For those children attending holiday club – if your child develops symptoms on Friday 2nd or Saturday 3rd April or during any club attendance days or two days following the last day they attended club, please inform us as above.

Staff car park – The school car park is for staff car parking and we ask you to park on the road at drop off and pick up. We are aware that a couple of families are parking on the car park, reducing spaces for staff as they arrive and causing more congestion on St Catherine's Rd as staff cars remain parked on the road. Please let any families know if you are aware of this in case they don't read this letter.

Number 8 St Catherine's Rd – Our neighbours at No. 8 have kindly notified us of building work due to commence at their property shortly and the additional hazard that this may cause at drop off and pick up times. They are particularly concerned about children running across their driveway when many contractor vehicles may be moving without the caution that the residents themselves show.

Writing journals

Writing is an area of the curriculum that we are working hard to accelerate progress in for all children. We know that many children find writing a challenge and lack motivation, particularly those at home without peers to encourage them!

If you watch Blue Class Family Assembly, you will notice that the children have written poems about themselves based on the Longfellow poem 'Hiawatha'. Writing about themselves is often easier for children, as they don't have to think so much about the content and can focus their efforts on punctuation, handwriting and spelling.

For this reason, every child in Green, Purple, Yellow and Blue Classes has been given a Writing Journal to write whatever they want in as they arrive at school each day. Perhaps chatting with them at home about what they may write will help them with their ideas. The intention is to get them writing again and build up their stamina for writing.

Any writing that they do over Easter will help them keep this stamina going, even if it is once a week and a short postcard to a family member. Many thanks for your support.